GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:130
ANSWERED ON:26.07.2016
Population of Vultures
Solanki Dr. Kirit Premjibhai

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of vultures in the country at present, State-wise;
(b) whether there has been a sharp decline in the population of vultures in the country for the last several years and if so, the details thereof during the last five years;
(c) the details of the steps taken by the Government for conservation of vultures; and
(d) the number of vultures conserved under the vulture conservation breeding programme particularly in Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centres so far along with the number of vultures released into the wild?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI ANIL MADHAV DAVE)

(a) to (d)A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

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STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a), (b), (c) AND (d) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO *130 REGARDING 'POPULATION OF VULTURES' BY DR. KIRIT P. SOLANKI FOR REPLY ON 26.7.2016.

(a) and (b)Based on the sampling surveys done in various parts of the country by the Bombay Natural History Society, it is estimated that there were over 40 million vultures of three resident species namely the White-backed Vulture, Long-billed Vulture and Slender-billed Vulture in the country during early eighties. Their population crashed during mid nineties and by 2007, the population of the White-backed Vulture had declined by 99.9% and Long-billed Vulture and Slender-billed Vulture by 97%. There were estimated to be 11000 White-backed Vulture, 44000 Long-billed Vulture and 1000 Slender-billed Vulture in the country in 2007. The population of the vultures appeared to have stabilized by the year 2011 as the rate of decline of population has improved over the period. State-wise population of vultures is not estimated and collated in the Ministry.

(c) The steps taken by Government for protection of Vultures in the country:

(i) Protection status of White backed, Long Billed and Slender Billed Vultures has been upgraded from Schedule IV to Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
(ii) Government of India has formulated a National Action Plan (2006) on Vulture Conservation. The Action Plan provides for strategies, actions for containing the decline of vulture population through ex-situ, in-situ vulture conservation.
(iii) The Government of India banned the veterinary use of the drug diclofenac which was found to be the cause of vulture mortality and crash in vulture population.
(iv) The Government of India also restricted the packaging size of the human formulation of the drug to 3ml in July 2015 to prevent the misuse of multi-dose vials available in 30 ml presentation in treating cattle.
(v) The Government of India through the Central Zoo Authority and State Governments supported a Conservation Breeding Programme and has established 8 Vulture or Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centres in the country. The first three centres were established at Pinjore in Haryana, Rajabhatkhawa at Alipurduar, West Bengal and Rani at Kamrup in Assam by the Bombay Natural History Society in collaboration with the State Governments. The rest of the five centres were established in various Zoos with the support of the Central Zoo Authority.
(vi) Department of forests of all states/UTs has been requested to constitute a Monitoring committee for vulture conservation with a view to implement the Action Plan, 2006 and for recovery of existing vulture sites.

(d) In the three centres established at Pinjore, Rajabhatkhawa and Rani a breeding population of vultures is maintained. The fledglings reared in these centres are released in wild later.

There are a total of 502 birds of the three species housed at the centres of which 230 have fledged at the centres. The Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre, Pinjore has the maximum number of 241 birds of which 128 are Long-billed Vulture, 80 White-backed Vulture and 33 Slender-billed. A total of 163 vultures have fledged at the Pinjore centre. The Vulture Release Programme was initiated on the 3rd June 2016 and two Himalayan Griffons were released in the wild.
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